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STAT

Reagan OK'd bid to oust Surinam chief, ABC says

Washington (AP) — President Reagan last December authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to try to overthrow the government of Surinam in secret, but the administration dropped the idea after objections from Congress, ABC News said last night.

CIA spokesman Dale Peterson said: "We can't comment on these kinds of allegations."

According to the report prepared for the "Nightline" program, a transcript of which was released in advance, CIA Director William J. Casey told the House and Senate intelligence committees that Surinam's ruler, Desi Bouterse, was leading the country into the Cuban orbit.

The CIA plan reportedly called for the formation of a paramilitary force of Surinamese exiles to topple the Bouterse government.

But committee members of both parties objected that there was no evidence that Cuba was "manipulating the government in Surinam, or gaining a military foothold in the country," the network said.

After the Senate committee weighed in with objections, Mr. Casey dropped the plan, it was reported.

Mr. Bouterse, who as a lieutenant colonel commanded Surinam's army, took power in a coup in February,



United Press International

DESI BOUTERSE

... Surinam's military leader

1982. Last fall, as opposition mounted, he rounded up dissident leaders, including journalists and labor leaders. Fifteen were shot to death, according to the government account, while trying to escape.

After that, the Dutch and U.S. governments suspended aid to Surinam, a Dutch colony until 1975.

More than 1,000 people reportedly have fled the tiny country on the northern coast of South America.